

The background of the entire image is a close-up, high-contrast photograph of a person's face, specifically focusing on the eyes. The image is in a monochromatic brown color scheme. The eyes are looking directly at the viewer, and the skin texture is visible. The lighting is dramatic, with deep shadows and bright highlights.

VOICE IT & BRAND UP

SPORTBRAND ACTIVISM



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WHY TO USE VOICE IT & BRAND UP?

To be successful in brand activism, sports brands need to utilise different strategies and platforms to effectively communicate their messages and secure the loyalty of their target audience. The guide **“Voice It & Brand Up”** is based on a comprehensive analysis of communication strategies of leading sports brands and the expectations of Generation Z. The term “Brand Up” comes from “stand up,” meaning to stand up for something one believes in and fights for, both socially and politically. “Voice It” signifies giving a brand a voice. It offers valuable insights and is aimed in particular at smaller sports brands. The guide serves as an important tool for designers, marketers and other stakeholders involved in brand activism initiatives. The aim is to promote a consistent and effective brand identity across different communication channels. The guide provides specific instructions on how to integrate brand activism into communication strategies and use each element effectively to reinforce the brand’s message and avoid inappropriate approaches.

CONTENT

01. Platforms & Design Elements for Brand Activism	5
02. Messages for Brand Activism	8
03. Expectations of Generation Z	11
04. Brand Activism for Customer Loyalty	13
05. Key Points	15
06. Don'ts	17
07. Path to the Goal	19

01. PLATFORMS & DESIGN ELEMENTS FOR BRAND ACTIVISM

“Which platforms and design elements do sports brands use in their owned media to communicate brand activism for Generation Z?”

Creativity is an integral part of Brand Activism. The communication strategies for brand activism that sports brands should implement for Gen Z include the use of various platforms and design elements. Websites, digital magazines, blogs, apps and social media such as Instagram, Facebook, X, YouTube and LinkedIn play a central role. Platform design elements should include high-quality, dynamic images of athletes and social initiatives. Text should be clear, motivating and easy to read, often in a sans serif font. Emotional videos on websites and social media can create a strong emotional connection. Design should be modern, interactive and user-friendly, with strategic use of colour schemes such as black and white for a professional look. Brand activism should be strategic, long-term and consistent with the brand.

**DIVERSE
PLATFORMS**

Utilize a variety of platforms such as websites, digital magazines, blogs, apps, and social media (Instagram, Facebook, X, YouTube, LinkedIn).

**CREATIVE
CONTENT**

Incorporate high-quality, dynamic images of athletes and social initiatives.

TEXT ELEMENTS

Ensure texts are clear, motivating, and easy to read, often using sans-serif fonts.

**EMOTIONAL
VIDEOS**

Use videos on websites and social media to create a strong emotional connection.

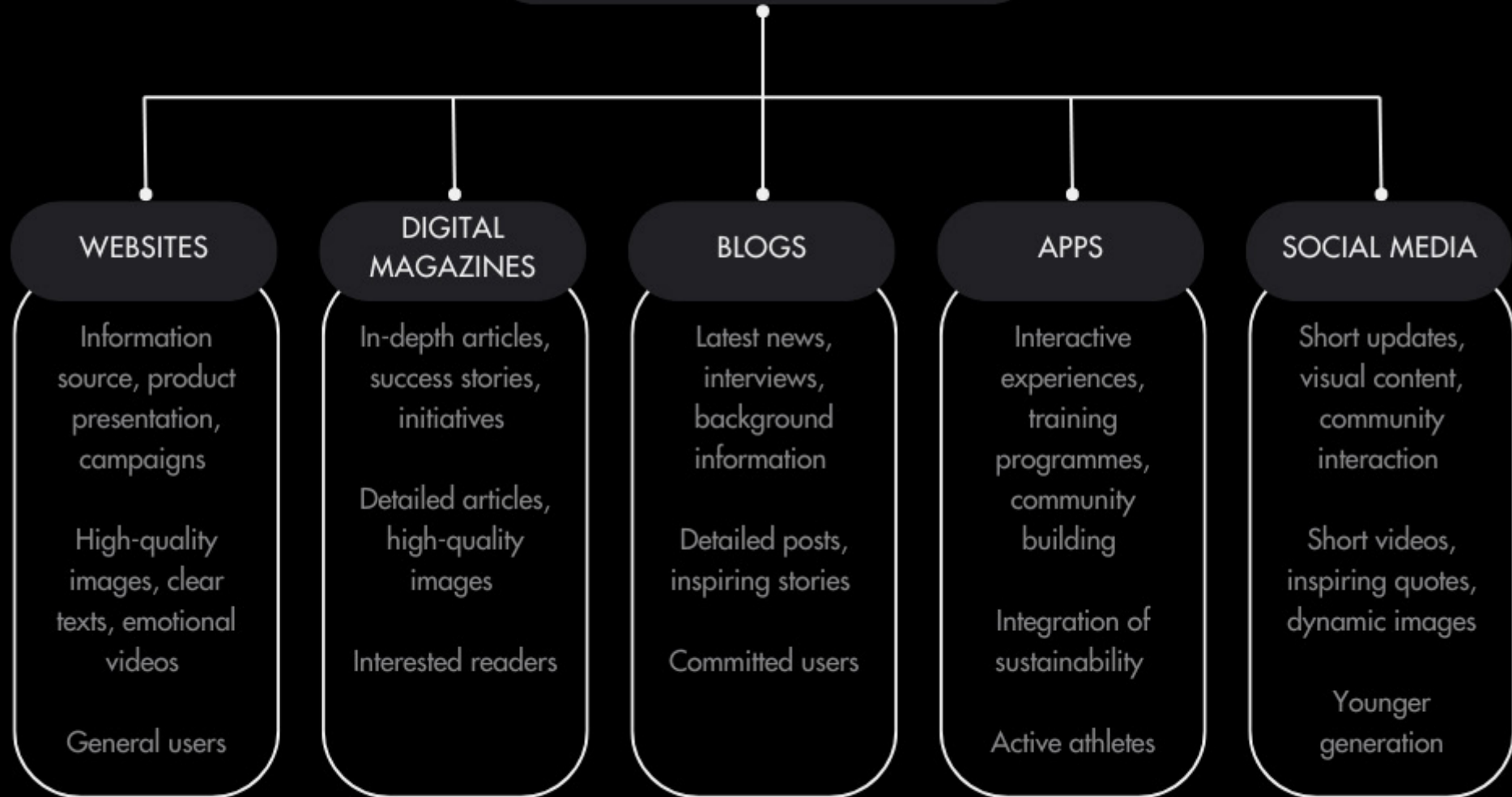
MODERN DESIGN

Design should be modern, interactive, and user-friendly, employing strategic color schemes like black and white for a professional look.

**STRATEGIC
ACTIVISM**

Brand activism should be strategic, long-term, and aligned with the brand's identity.

PLATFORMS



02. MESSAGES FOR BRAND ACTIVISM

“What messages do sports brands communicate in their owned media to promote brand activism for Generation Z?”

Sports brands communicate various messages to promote brand activism. Nike places particular emphasis on social justice, ethnic equality and environmentally friendly initiatives. Adidas focuses on sustainable innovation and fair working conditions. On Running emphasises sport excellence and individual success, combining sustainability with innovation. These messages are intended to have a broad social impact and act as pioneers in social and environmental issues. They are designed to gain the trust and loyalty of customers. Social justice, ethnic equality, sustainability, empowerment and diversity are messages of brand activism. Brand activism must be anchored in the brand and goes beyond mere words. It should always be at the centre of communication.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Emphasize messages around social justice, ethnic equality, and environmental initiatives.

SUSTAINABILITY AND FAIR PRACTICES

Highlight sustainable innovations and fair labor practices.

INDIVIDUAL EXCELLENCE

Focus on sports excellence and individual achievements combined with sustainability.

BROAD IMPACT

Aim for broad social impact, acting as leaders in social and ecological issues.

CORE VALUES

Center messages around core values like social justice, ethnic equality, sustainability, empowerment, and diversity.

INTEGRATED ACTIVISM

Ensure brand activism is deeply integrated into the brand, going beyond mere words to actions.



03. EXPECTATIONS OF GENERATION Z

“Why does Generation Z customers expect more from sports brands than just a high-quality and stylish product?”

Gen Z attaches great importance to social and political commitment and expects brands to actively contribute to positive change. Gen Z expects sports brands to make social and political statements, take concrete measures, be authentic and avoid greenwashing. Gen Z has higher expectations compared to the late millennials. They favour environmentally friendly production and distribution practices and using the reach of sports brands to create awareness. This reflects Gen Z's desire for sustainable and concrete measures and their critical attitude towards superficial commitments. In today's world, polarisation is not necessarily negative. Consumers around the world now trust companies more than government institutions.

HIGH ENGAGEMENT

Generation Z values brands that actively contribute to positive societal changes.

AUTHENTICITY

Brands must be authentic and avoid superficial engagement or greenwashing.

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Emphasize environmentally friendly production and distribution practices.

AWARENESS CREATION

Use brand reach to create awareness around important social and political issues.

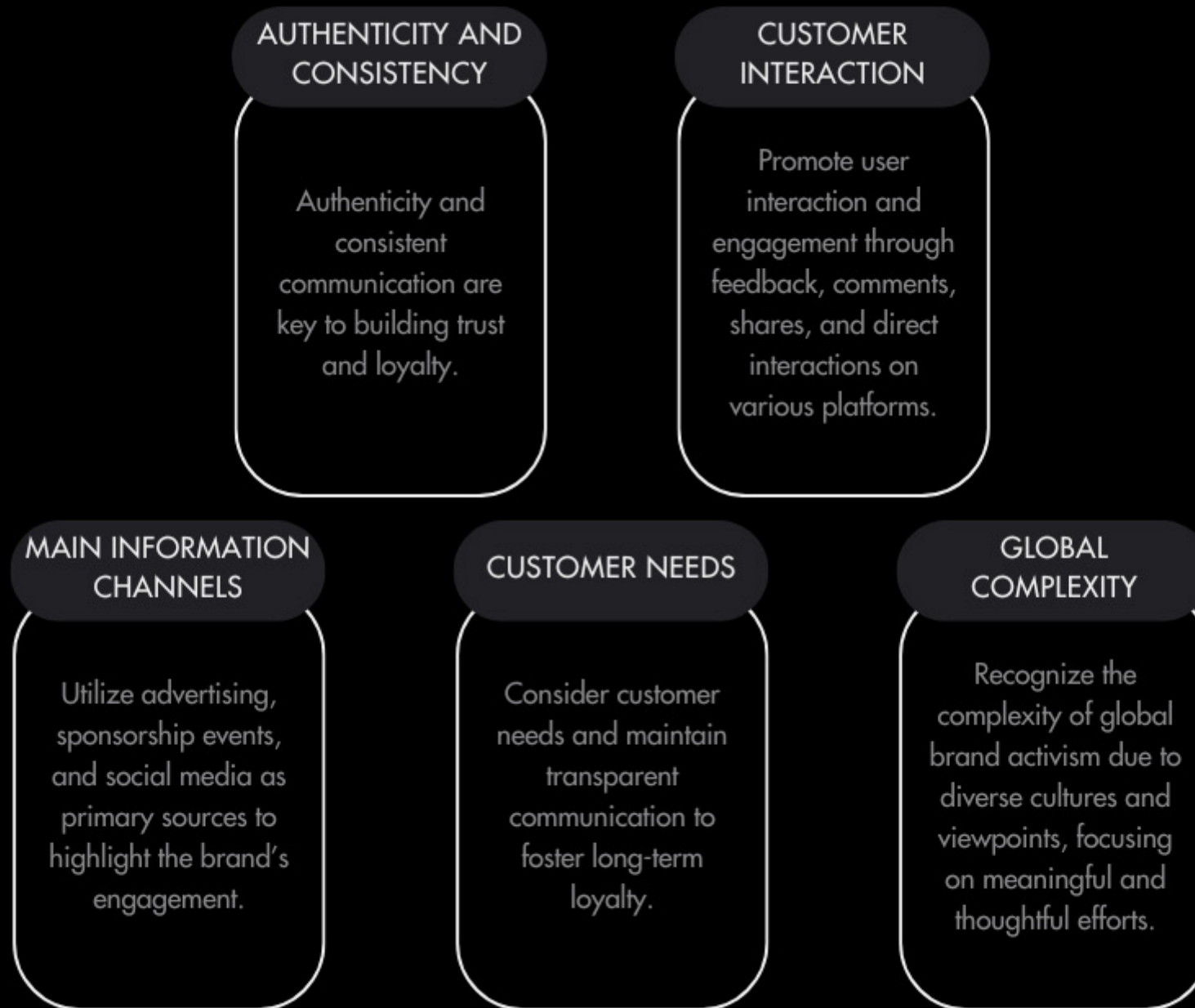
CRITICAL APPROACH

Understand the critical stance of Generation Z towards superficial efforts, preferring concrete actions.

04. BRAND ACTIVISM FOR CUSTOMER LOYALTY

“How can brand activism contribute to long-term customer loyalty and which factors are decisive in this regard?”

Brand activism strengthens customer loyalty by promoting authenticity and consistency. The decisive factors here are the alignment of brand values with customer expectations and transparent communication. To ensure long-term customer loyalty, sports brands promote user interaction and engagement. This includes feedback opportunities, comments, shares and direct interactions on various platforms. Advertising and sponsorship events as well as social media are the main sources through which the target groups become aware of Sportbrands' commitment. Key factors for long-term customer loyalty through brand activism include user interactions, main sources of information, influence on brand loyalty, consideration of customer needs and transparent communication. Brand activism on a global level is more difficult and complex than on a national level due to different cultures and mindsets around the world. Although it makes sense, it is not an easy path.



05. KEY POINTS

“What communication strategies should sports brands implement for Generation Z with regard to their social and political commitment in order to promote customer loyalty?”

Sports brands should use a variety of digital platforms to spread their messages. High-quality visual content, clear and motivating texts and emotional videos are key elements. Platform designs should be modern and interactive. Messages should focus on social justice, ethnic equality, sustainable innovation and personal achievement. Authenticity and consistent communication are key to gaining and maintaining the trust and loyalty of Gen Z. Gen Z's expectations of the brand's social engagement are high and include environmentally friendly practices and using the brand's reach to create awareness. Sports brands must fulfill these expectations in order to promote long-term customer loyalty.

MULTI-PLATFORM USE

Employ multiple digital platforms to disseminate messages effectively.

VISUAL AND TEXTUAL CONTENT

Focus on high-quality visual content, clear and motivational text, and emotional videos.

MODERN INTERACTIVE DESIGN

Ensure platforms have a modern, interactive design that is user-friendly.

FOCUSED MESSAGES

Deliver messages centered on social justice, equality, sustainable innovation, and personal achievement.

CONSISTENCY AND TRUST

Maintain authenticity and consistent communication to build and retain trust and loyalty among Generation Z.

MEETING HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Address the high expectations of Generation Z by engaging in environmentally friendly practices and using the brand's influence for awareness creation.

06. DON'TS

These “**don'ts**” will help to avoid common mistakes and ensure effective and credible implementation of Sportbrand Activism.

Low quality visual and textual content

Don't use low-quality or unprofessional visual content.

Do not overload your texts with technical jargon or information that is difficult to understand.

Neglecting high expectations

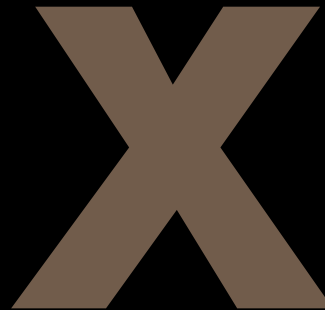
Don't neglect sustainable practices or only focus on short-term measures.

Don't ignore Generation Z's critical attitude towards superficial engagement.

Unclear or contradictory messages

Do not send unclear or contradictory messages.

Do not neglect important topics that are relevant to your target group.

**Inconsistency and untrustworthiness**

Do not make empty promises or engage in greenwashing.

Do not frequently change your messages or campaign directions as this can damage your brand's credibility.

Limited platform utilisation

Don't just focus on one or two platforms.

Don't ignore new or emerging platforms that are popular with Generation Z.

Outdated or non-intuitive design

Do not use outdated or non-intuitive designs.

Do not neglect the user-friendliness and accessibility of your platforms.

Do not use inappropriate or overly bright colour schemes that detract from the user experience.

07. PATH TO THE GOAL

This “**Path to the Goal**” plan provides a structured approach for sport brands to develop and implement effective brand activism communication strategies tailored to the values and expectations of Generation Z.

TARGET AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Understand the values, expectations, and communication habits of Generation Z.

BRAND IDENTITY REVIEW

Ensure your brand is authentic and aligns consistently with the values of brand activism.

01.

Analysis and Planning

GOAL SETTING

Define clear objectives for your brand activism, such as increasing customer loyalty or promoting social and environmental initiatives.

ALLOCATE RESOURCES

Ensure you have the necessary resources (personnel, budget, technology) to effectively communicate on these platforms.

02.

Platform Selection and Preparation

IDENTIFY PLATFORMS

Choose digital platforms that your target audience frequently uses (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn).

VISUAL CONTENT

Produce high-quality, dynamic images and videos that compellingly present your messages and initiatives.

TEXTUAL CONTENT

Write clear, motivational, and easy-to-read texts that convey your values and messages.

EMOTIONAL APPROACH

Develop emotional stories and videos that create a strong connection with your audience.

03.

Content Development

MODERN DESIGN

Ensure your digital platforms are designed to be modern and user-friendly.

04.

Design and Interactivity

IDENTIFY PLATFORMS

Incorporate interactive elements that enhance the user experience and encourage engagement.

FOCUSED MESSAGES

Concentrate on core themes such as social justice, ethnic equality, sustainable innovation, and personal achievement.

05.

Messages and Campaigns

CAMPAIGN PLANNING

Plan long-term campaigns that consistently and authentically support your brand activism goals.

CONSISTENCY AND TRUST

Maintain consistent and authentic communication to build trust and loyalty.

06.

Communication Strategy

TRANSPARENCY

Be transparent about your initiatives and progress to strengthen credibility.

USER INTERACTION

Promote interaction with your users through feedback options, comments, shares, and direct communication.

07.

Interaction and Engagement

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Build an engaged community that shares your values and supports your initiatives.

INCREASE AWARENESS

Use your platforms and resources to raise awareness about important social and environmental issues.



Awareness and Reach

INFLUENCERS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Collaborate with influencers and partner organizations to extend your reach and amplify your messages.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Regularly monitor the performance of your campaigns and communication strategies.

09.

Monitoring and Adjustment

ADJUSTMENT

Adapt your strategies based on insights gained to remain effective continuously.

SUSTAINABILITY

Commit to long-term, sustainable practices and initiatives that go beyond short-term campaigns.

10.

Long-Term Commitment

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Consider cultural differences and think globally while acting locally.

AFTERWORD

Sports brands that want to successfully pursue brand activism must ensure that their commitment is deeply rooted in the corporate culture and communicated authentically. By considering the above strategies and expectations, sports brands can gain and maintain the trust and loyalty of their customers.

This guide is based on comprehensive analyses and results, which are presented in detail in the underlying bachelor thesis.

“
IF YOU WANT TO FIGHT, YOU HAVE TO ADVOCATE
CHANGE AND THAT STARTS WITH YOURSELF.”